Baird, Subcommittee Emphasize Competitiveness in Reauthorizing National Science Foundation (April 19, 2007)

Washington, D.C. - Maintaining a focus on U.S. competitiveness in the 21st century, the Science & Technology Subcommittee on Research and Science Education today passed a bill to reauthorize the National Science Foundation for fiscal years 2008, 2009 and 2010.

The bill, H.R. 1867, the National Science Foundation Authorization Act of 2007, establishes a pilot program of one-year seed grants for new investigators to help improve funding rates for young investigators and stimulate higher-risk research; encourages NSF to foster relationships between academia and industry in order to spawn U.S. competitiveness and furthers the agencyï¿½s traditions of education in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields.

ï¿½The National Science Foundation has a mission to achieve excellence in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education at all levels and all settings, from kindergarten through postdoctoral training, from classrooms to science museums and online resources,ï¿½ said Subcommittee Chairman Brian Baird (D-WA), who introduced the bipartisan bill along with Committee Chairman Bart Gordon (D-TN), Rep. Vern Ehlers (R-MI), Rep. Darlene Hooley (D-OR), Rep. Brian Bilbray (R-CA), Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-CA) and Rep. Baron Hill (D-IN).

ï¿½The National Science Foundation has 50 years of proven success in math and science education,ï¿½ said Chairman Gordon. ï¿½It is the critical link to providing our teachers with the education and training they need to ensure our students are prepared for the jobs of the future.ï¿½

The NSF Authorization Act also authorizes:

- $16.4 billion for research and related activities (R&RA);

- $2.8 billion for education and human resources (EHR);

- $787 million for major research facilities.

H.R. 1867 also authorizes funding from within the education account for certain NSF education programs, including those authorized under H.R. 362, the ï¿½10,000 Teachers, 10 Million Minds,ï¿½ Math and Science Scholarship Act, authored by Chairman Gordon. That measure was reported by the Committee in March and is expected on the House floor in

April.

In the interest of encouraging innovation and technology transfer, H.R. 1867 would also require the director to give special consideration to proposals (during the merit review process) that include partnerships between academic researchers and industrial scientists and engineers. In particular, special consideration would be given to those university/industry partnerships that address research areas considered highly important for future national economic competitiveness.

ï¿½As we see high-paying jobs outsourced, our children graduating high school well behind their international peers in understanding of basic science concepts, China surging ahead in export of high-tech products ï¿½ it has finally sunk in,ï¿½ Chairman Baird said. ï¿½Funding basic research and teaching our children math and science has a tremendous impact on our ability to compete in a global marketplace, our national security, and on the future of our workforce.ï¿½

The Research & Science Education Subcommittee has held two hearings this Congress (March 20 & March 29) examining the priorities that should be addressed in the 2007 NSF Reauthorization bill, such as encouraging young researchers, K-16 STEM education and balancing funding between interdisciplinary and disciplinary research.

The NSF is unique among the federal governmentï¿½s scientific research agencies in that it supports science and engineering across all disciplines. Each year, NSF supports an average of about 200,000 scientists, engineers, educators and students at universities, laboratories and field sites all over the U.S. and throughout the world.

The following amendments were adopted by the Committee:by Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) ï¿½ Requires an annual report to congress with details about the allocation of funds for activities to improve education and broaden participation; by Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX) ï¿½ Requires a National Academy of Sciences Report on barriers to and recommendations for broadening participation of underrepresented minorities in STEM fields; and, by Rep. Darlene Hooley (D-OR) ï¿½ Creates an allocation from within the Research and Related Activities account to support the Research Experience for Undergraduates program.

The bill is set for mark-up by the full Committee next week.

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